traits, household items, and weapons. Fort McHenry's collections include weapons, flags, furniture, archives, rare books, photographs, uniforms, and a sizable archeology collection.

At the present time, there is one museum technician responsible for monitoring these collections, an estimated 30,000 items. To expedite and facilitate monitoring the relative humidity and temperature in the building, a computerized remote data logger system was installed recently using monies from the Museum Collection Preservation Program. With this new modem system, staff can dial the phone number in the Civil War Powder Magazine, access the remote data loggers and obtain temperature and relative humidity levels. The data is then communicated to the computer and charts can be printed from the museum technician's office at another location in the park. This technique avoids unnecessary traffic in the inner room, assuring a cleaner, more stable environment for the collections.

This unique structure, built primarily to protect valuable powder from the ravages of war, today has a more productive and creative function preserving irreplaceable museum collections from the ravages of time and an urban industrial environment.

It is fortunate that the park chose to convert a Civil War era structure to a bombproof, stable, secure storage facility with a "high tech" monitoring system to preserve and protect important collections of two national parks.

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This article was previously published in the Northeast Museum Services Quarterly.

Behind the many uses to which we put collections are the curators who care for and research all of the materials. Who are the people who do the research that makes it possible to use the collections properly and wisely? The following article discusses the curator as an important resource.

Doris D. Fanelli

The Curator as Social Historian

City Tavern, c. 1976. Eighteenth century dining and drinking customs, foodways, and social dancing were some of the research topics curators undertook to assemble an accurate reference guide to furnishing this working restaurant. Contemporary prints were a rich source of detail for the bar enclosure pictured here.

As national parks face an era of dwindling financial support and shrinking staff, it is beneficial to regard present staffing in new ways. This article argues that curators of history collections in national parks are an overlooked resource of historical data and research. Examples given are based on the history of curation at Independence National Historical Park. The curators at Independence have strong interdisciplinary backgrounds which have included advanced study in historical methods. This training is evident in their vision of their collections as simultaneously objects deserving of the highest standards of care and a body of data that can yield historical information and inspire questions. This approach isn't new among the community of material culture scholars. As early as 1978, Thomas J. Schlereth discussed the interstices of social history and history curation in "Historic Houses as Learning Laboratories." However, within the National Park Service, the curator's identity as a social historian is sometimes overlooked. The history collection curator must, per force, be a social historian in order to competently execute her/his work. National Park Service curators and their research are a rich resource of social history studies and should be included in the current discourse among historians within and outside of the agency. [1]

Among the cultural resources that historical parks are charged to preserve are collections of material culture in the broadest sense : archeological remains, fine and decorative arts, architectural fragments, relics, curiosities, natural history specimens, and their attendant documentation. The very rationale for such holdings requires a curator to exercise the skills of a social historian in order to understand and optimally manage his charges. A curator must have an intimate knowledge of the context in which the collections were produced, used, and assembled in order to perform her job. The necessity of this knowledge is paramount for

the preparation of a scope of collections statement that governs the collection's development; for the description of the collection for accountability purposes; for the prioritization of conservation needs and the expenditure of funds; for the evaluation of prospective accessions; for the determination of security requirements; for the preparation of furnishings studies; and for the accurate installation of historic interiors and exhibitions. Although Independence National Historical Park wasn't authorized until 1948, its collections date to 1824 when the City of Philadelphia converted the Assembly Room of Independence Hall into a public shrine in honor of the return visit of the Marquis de Lafayette.

Bishop William White's Study *by John Sartain, oil/canvas (1836). This painting,now exhibited in the Second Bank of the United States, provided the wealth of detail needed to accurately recreate the study during the 1960s.*

Photos courtesy Independence National Historical Park.

The shrine immediately attracted donations of works of art and historic memorabilia. With the exception of two outstanding collections of portraits by members of the Peale and Sharples families, collections development was serendipitous. Through donations, the committee that governed the museum acquired an antiquarian miscellany that symbolically chronicled America's origins. The resulting display of some 3,100 relics, statues, portraits, household furnishings, autographs, costumes, and military memorabilia exemplified the Victorian habit of adopting the vocabulary elements of various styles of ornament and re-combining them into a new language that relied upon familiar forms to communicate new thoughts.

It wasn't until the first quarter of the 20th century that a curator, Wilfred Jordan, described the formal characteristics of the collections when he developed a taxonomy and an organizational framework for them. The rationale for his categories of classifications and their accompanying numeric system was lost long ago. National Park Service curators, upon their arrival in 1951, began cataloging the collection into NPS format and now are re-configuring it into the Automated National Catalog System (ANCS) format as funds permit. But the earlier record file system has its own archival integrity which we've maintained because of its value as a social artifact. It demonstrates how the collections' former keepers regarded it. The Liberty Bell, for example, was classified as a "musical instrument." The original catalog entries are equally baffling in their logic and incurious about their subject—quite opposite from our contemporary desire for detailed description and research.

Today, Independence uses refurnished historic interiors to interpret the past. To succeed in these recreations, curators have used their training in history as much as their training in curation. Curatorial concerns echo academic trends in historiography that inquire into discrete aspects of everyday life. Curators can contribute to this inquiry. Because what is collections and furnishings research but an inquiry into social practices, customs, mores, organizations, and institutions as reflected by their material products. This proposition is demonstrated by the body of research curators at Independence Park who have produced over some 40 years in order to properly document, manage, and install the collections.

Even those rare cases where there is an apparent abundance of surviving furnishings can be frustrating for the curator assigned to install them in a historically accurate manner. The Bishop White house is a good example. Assigned in the 1960s to produce the furnishings plan for the house, curator Charles Dorman was able to acquire for the park a great deal of the household furnishings of William White, the first consecrated bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America and chaplain of the Second Continental Congress. White's descendants had preserved his possessions, including an oil painting of the Bishop's study , made shortly after his death in July 1836, that permits the accurate recreation of that room. The painting is a documentary treasure of household management practices such as the substitution of canton straw matting for wool carpets during the summer. Even the bishop's idiosyncratic habit of extinguishing his cigar on the chair rail behind his desk is visible in artist John Sartain's exquisite portrayal of the room. Unfortunately, there is not a similar degree of documentation for the remainder of the Bishop's town house, an eight level, 13-room structure that should convey to visitors the tastes and habits of the colonial and early republic upperclass. To mitigate the lack of detail, Mr. Dorman undertook a comparative study of household inventories in order to discern room use and typical furnishings. This data, combined with an investigation of other primary sources such as letters and diaries of the White family's friends and contemporaries, contributed not only to the accuracy of the house's installation, but also to the accuracy of the catalog records of this unique collection and to our knowledge of Philadelphia social history.

Working under time pressures, the curatorial staff was able to install only five rooms of the Bishop White House before it opened to the public. Subsequently, in 1989, the curatorial staff

undertook a re-study of the third floor as part of a continuing effort to make more areas of the house available. This work built upon the furnishings issues raised 20 years earlier; but during the intervening years, social historians were asking new questions and the third floor installation provided an opportunity to contribute to the discourse. The Bishop's five granddaughters occupied the two rooms of the third floor at the time of his death. Refurnishing the spaces to that era permitted the curators to discuss the roles of upper-class, single young women in the early republic. How did they fill their days? What roles did they have in the management of their widowed grandfather's household? What was acceptable deportment both in the home and outside of it? And, how could all this information be portrayed in the furnishings and their arrangement in the two rooms on the third floor? The responses to the questions formed the basis of the refurnishing plan. The curator in charge of the project, Anne Verplanck, subtly offered answers through her recommendations for furnishings. She analyzed biographical information about the White granddaughters and their peers. From that data, eight categories of activities emerged that could be portrayed in the installation: household management, participation in benevolent associations, reading, correspondence, sewing, music, drawing and painting, and visiting. Archeological evidence from the Bishop White house site helped confirm these categories and direct acquisitions. Like most scholars of the 18th century, Ms. Verplanck soon discovered that the numerous occupants and staffs of extended-family households had far different expectations of personal living space and privacy than their modern counterparts. She successfully conveyed this information by the skillful placement of collections in a manner both cramped and careful of the objects. The visitor is able to comprehend the tensions among five young women sharing these two rooms. The degree of civility this proximity necessitated is evidenced in the perfectly set tea table, the sewing table, and furniture groupings intended to convey the standards of ritual politesse the occupants maintained at all times. This functional methodology yielded equally detailed results at the Declaration house where an analysis of Thomas Jefferson's consumer habits formed the basis of the recommended furnishings list and the arrangement of the installation.

When the curators began their work at Independence, the bibliography on 18th-century urban life was surprisingly small. In fact, conventional wisdom in historical installations didn't always distinguish urban practices from rural. During the mid-19th century, "colonial kitchen" became a euphemism for an open hearth crammed with every conceivable implement for food preparation, laundry, housecleaning, and even personal hygiene. The staffs of historic sites as well as their visitors unquestioningly accepted many of the objects associated with recreated kitchens. Spinning wheels, wash tubs, bread peels, and innumerable oddly-shaped ceramics were considered essential furnishings and had become icons, rather than vehicles for interpretation. The situation was exacerbated in urban areas where a lack of available space prompted the conclusion that city cooks performed the same range of tasks as their rural counterparts, but in smaller spaces. In 1982, the park's curatorial intern, Jane Busch, undertook a special topics study on urban kitchens with the goal of improving the installations in the Todd and Bishop White houses. The resultant report indicated that contrary to popular thought, urban dwellers did not practice the same range of culinary tasks to the same degree as their rural counterparts. The Philadelphia household manager maximized the convenience of her location and purchased pre-cooked items or sent baking and roasting to established bake houses outside the home. A second important result of this report was the careful study of 18th-century nomenclature for cooking apparatus in order to distinguish the variety of forms of cookware. serving vessels, and utensils. Curatorially, this report prompted the re-identification and the select removal of anomalous equipment from the exhibits; ceramics and wooden containers, properly shaped for the tasks portrayed, were added. Interpretively, the report permitted a redefinition of the kitchen in urban households.

Studies of spaces for food preparation inevitably provoke questions about foodways. The task of properly installing the kitchens and areas of food and beverage consumption in 20 different spaces in the park, forced curators to discover what foods were seasonally available in Philadelphia, and how those foods were prepared and served. Implements for boning and serving shad, for example, should only be in evidence during late winter and early spring when the fish is spawning in the Delaware River. Oyster shucking knives should be removed from the kitchens from May through August. The curatorial staff is about to embark on another foodways study during the coming year with the goal of improving our installations.

Food service is the focus of City Tavern, a recreated, operating concession. When curator Constance V. Hershey researched the furnishings study for the tavern and then recommended period and reproduction furnishings for its installation, she was struck by the changing norms in the consumption of alcohol over time. Bills for fashionable

parties held in taverns considered genteel eating establishments detailed quantities of alcohol that would be considered excessive, even dangerous today. Curatorially, this information prompted increasing the portrayal of the role of alcohol in 18th-century daily life by adding bottles, barrels, measuring, sifting and stirring utensils, glassware and ceramics—the material culture of drinking—to all of our installations. I was reminded of Ms. Hershey's work at a 1993 conference when David Brion Davis commented that historians have been remiss in considering the effects of the social construction of alcohol on history.[2]

Who was serving the food? And washing the dishes? Where were the comestibles stored, the linens kept? How did a linen press work, a goffering iron? Responding to trends in social history, curators had grown dissatisfied with historic houses that only presented the public areas of the domestic installations. In order to fully portray a household's dynamics, curators at Independence recognized the necessity of examining servitude in 18th-century Philadelphia. Karie Diethorn's inquiry describes the uniqueness of the master/servant relationship, one of simultaneous denial and dependence manifested by the householder's expectations of invisibility and ubiquity. Ms. Diethom's study portrays this tension in tangible ways through such recommended additions to the domestic installations as a bell system, a bedstead in a moiety or garret with no accompanying bedchamber furnishings such as a chest of drawers. Rather, storage boxes and equipment for ironing should be arranged in the same area, thereby emphasizing the servant's lack of personal space, time, and individualized identity. This critique also permitted broadening our interpretation to include the presence of African Americans who we know resided in the installations as slaves or servants. For example, Bishop White employed free blacks as resident servants. Jefferson's slave, Bob Hemmings, was in Philadelphia during the Second Continental Congress. Shoe blacking and laundry bundles in the refurnished bedchamber of the Declaration House signify Hemmings' duties and permit discussion of his status.

The servitude study was class-centered; however, it prompted a series of equally provocative questions about the household spaces that class frequented. Curatorial intern, John Bacon, examined the ancillary spaces in homes, basements, attics, and backyards to recommend ways to make them vital parts of the installations. He studied the architecture of these spaces as well as extant primary evidence of their uses and furnishings. The report demonstrates that the ancillary spaces of homes were both storage and staging areas for the social performances in the public spaces. Simultaneously, cellars, garrets, and attics were used as dining areas or sleeping quarters for servants or even members of the householder's family. The furnishings in these areas should reflect these shifting uses. Seasonal storage of carpets or matting; traveler's trunks, a corner chair for invalids, extra dishes and glassware should share the limited spaces with temporary bedsteads. In addition to an area for serving meals to boarders as in the example of the Kosciuszko house in the early-19th century, cellars provided a cool environment for food and beverage storage, additional space for seasonal food preparation activities such as pickling or salting, and for laundry. Every square foot of the 18th-century home was active on a daily basis. Mr. Bacon describes the transformation of basements and attics from their status as important service areas integral to 18th-century domestic life into drafty, dank, foreboding places of evil in 19th-century literature where murderers concealed their victims, families hid their worst secrets, or discarded objects underwent a transition from useless to antique. Such a curatorial space study is social history at its most powerful.

Curators also use the data these studies generate to solve collections care issues. One troubling problem at Independence is the adverse effect of sunlight on collections in refurnished rooms. Competing preservation interests between historic structures and installations have made the standard solutions of filtering films and interior filtering storm windows impractical. Faced with the dilemma between historical accuracy and optimal collections care, we determined to adopt the viewpoint of the 18th-century household manager and assume as many light-reduction techniques as possible. This has included the introduction of operable window hangings that can be adjusted to reduce direct sunlight and the accurate and effective use of reproduction textiles in the forms of table and case piece coverings, bed hangings, and slipcovers. Currently, Amy Newell is completing a study on textiles in Philadelphia homes which we hope will yield even more evidence for the introduction of reproduction textiles.

The foregoing isn't intended to be an exhaustive list of the many ways the curatorial staff at Independence Park practices social history. Rather, I've attempted to demonstrate the essential link between curatorial work and social history in a setting such as Independence. The installation of collections into recreated historical environments requires original research that can have value for the park's interpreters and for the scholarly community. The information generated can have application to every aspect of the curatorial program. The concerns about the accurate portrayal of the past that curatorial work generates should be con-

sidered in the development of the park's research program. By presenting examples of this thesis in the above examples in a sequential order, I've tried to show that the best answers are sometimes those that provoke more questions.

Notes

[1]Thomas J. Schlereth, "Historic Houses as Learning Laboratories: Seven Teaching Strategies," Technical Leaflet 105, American Association for State and Local History (1978). Written as a brief for teachers, the author suggests the variety of inquiries into the past afforded by historic houses. Furnishings and collections ultimately figure at the center of most of the approaches which include spatial concepts, household artifacts, literary and symbolic interpretation.

[2]Davis' comments were made during the conference, "Through a Glass Darkly: Defining Self in Early America," sponsored by the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia.

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Martha J. Lee

Bibliography—Publications Using NPS Museum Collections

This list is a sampling of publications and other items that have used National Park Service collections. It was compiled in February 1995 largely from citations submitted by individuals from about 50 National Park Service units across the country, and by members of cooperating associations. In most cases it was compiled without seeing the publication. Please send any comments, corrections, or additions to Martha Lee, Yosemite Museum, National Park Service, P.O. Box 577, Yosemite National Park, California 95389 or via email to Martha_Lee@nps.gov.

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[Bates, Yosemite's Curator of Ethnography, has published over 100 articles since the mid-1970s. This is just a small representative list.]

1978 The Reflexed Sinew-Backed Bow of the Sierra Miwok: AStudy of Regional Variation. ***Ethnic Technology Notes*** No. 16. San Diego Museum of Man. [historic photographs and objects from Yosemite NP]